

Shaky foundations need re-evangelization

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

A 25-year-old U.S. Marine recently responded to my letter seeking his thoughts about today's abandonment of traditional values and what measures should be taken to change the situation. Here are excerpts:

Marine: "Our generation has been raised unlike earlier generations in America, and I believe this all stems back to the movements of the sixties, of which many of our parents were a part. The great responsibility that rests on our shoulders is to rediscover all of those worthwhile traditional values that have been cast aside."

We are a generation that has been brought up to question everything, especially the long-standing institutions that previous generations took for granted to be benevolent and necessary ... We are just experiencing one of those periods in history where values that had once been accepted are now being challenged and re-challenged."

Comment: I wonder if that is why such

people as Madonna and Phil Donahue have such an enthusiastic following, while others such as Pat Buchanan, Jim Lehrer and Robin MacNeal — who I believe represent reason — appeal to a relatively limited audience.

Marine: "Another factor that is a result of all this is that most people my age did not have the childhood indoctrination our parents were given."

Comment: What childhood indoctrination? He's probably referring to the emphasis placed on family life, Catholic schools, effective religious education, and clarity of the catechism.

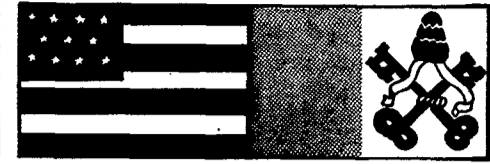
Marine: "The other night I went with a friend, Kevin, who told me that when he was in Saudi Arabia in the hospital one of the nurses gave him a rosary and showed him how to use it. I was surprised to hear that he had never learned how before. He is a practicing Catholic, and in fact spent a year in the seminary."

Comment: Praise the influence of good women. They have long kept the church

afloat. The fact that Kevin had not learned the rosary from his parents, or from a Catholic school, is disappointing. When he was in the seminary, strange things were happening. I know of one where the rosary was discouraged, Benediction was ridiculed, daily Mass was dropped, and the seminary finally closed.

Marine: "Our generation has a unique opportunity to rediscover the faith we have with a mature mind. Rather than memorization to save our knuckles, we are able to thoroughly digest it all as we strengthen that foundation which was begun in our youth."

Comment: The knuckle-cracking story was not a fact in his days. My youthful friend probably heard of this during hilarious stories told by his elders. Years ago, some overzealous teachers thought it a means to save souls. The memorization of the catechism was an instrument, which preserved an understanding and practice of the faith. Those who memorized the catechism grew in an understanding of the



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

precious truths, in faith and in morals and in practice, which they had stored in their memories.

It would seem that the assertion, "We're able to thoroughly digest it all as we strengthen the foundation that was begun in our youth," seems hardly to hold water, since the foundation in youth is so weak. We need a re-evangelization in the faith, an idea my friend would strongly support.

He is intelligent, studious, and good-natured, so I will send him *Theology and Sanity* by Frank Sheed. The book is old and hard, but it is not too difficult.

The church attracts followers after Peter's miracle

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

Despite continued persecution, the church in Jerusalem continued to grow. Many followers of the Way began forming throughout the region. The apostles spent time with these new churches, ministering to the followers and teaching them everything about Jesus.

One day, while Peter was staying at a house in Lydda, some people from the church in Joppa came looking for him. "Please come with us," they said. "Tabitha, a holy woman who lives in our town, became ill suddenly and died. She had many friends and they are very distressed."

Peter went with them to the neighboring town, which was only a short distance away. He said nothing as he walked along. Instead, he kept praying silently the same words: "Lord, what would you have me do?"

Tabitha's house was overflowing with people. When some of the mourners saw the small party approaching, they ran down the road to meet them.

"Tabitha was loved by all who knew her," one woman said.

"She was a skilled seamstress," another added. "See the lovely dress she made for



me. Not only that, she fashioned many garments for the poor."

"Why did she have to die so young?" someone else asked.

By the time Peter finally arrived at the house, he was nearly overcome with grief with all that was said about Tabitha.

Tabitha's closest friends were standing around weeping. Many had brought the clothing she had made for them, too.

"Where is the body of Tabitha?" Peter asked.

"She is lying in the room upstairs," a woman replied.

Several of the mourners went with Peter to the dead woman's room. But he turned to them all saying, "Please leave me alone with the body now so I can pray."

Peter looked at Tabitha. "Lord, what would you have me do?" he asked aloud.

As he continued to petition the Lord,

Peter's thoughts drifted back to another time. He had been with James and John at the house of Jairus, who had come seeking Jesus' help because his daughter had been very ill. By the time they arrived at his home, his daughter had already died.

"This girl is only sleeping," Jesus told the people who stood around wailing. But the people had only laughed at his words. Jesus had sent everyone out of the dead girl's room except for her parents.

They had all watched in amazement as Jesus took the child's hand and commanded: "Little girl, get up!"

Jesus had restored a dead girl to life in sight of them all. Peter's heart flooded with such overwhelming sorrow that he said aloud: "Why did you have to leave us, Lord?"

No sooner had he uttered his plea when a response came to Peter as clear as if the

Lord was standing by him again: "If I didn't go, the Spirit could not come to help you. Now you will be able to do even greater miracles than I."

Peter rose from his knees and went over to the dead woman.

"Tabitha, get up!" he said.

When the woman opened her eyes, Peter helped her up from her bed. Everyone in the house was amazed to see Tabitha alive.

"It was through Jesus Christ that this miracle was done," Peter told them.

News of the raising of Tabitha from the dead spread all over the region. And the church gained many more new followers.

Scripture Reference: Acts 9:36-43; Mark 5:35-43.

Meditation: "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26).

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